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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001054

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SUBJECT: EU PUSHES ON AFTER SANCTIONS DECISION

REF: TASHKENT 1010

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY CDA BRAD HANSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

11. (C) Summary: After the EU decision to extend sanctions to Uzbekistan, the EU Special Representative to Central Asia, Pierre Morel, visited Tashkent on May 28 to explain the sanctions decision and EU continue engagement with the Uzbeks. Although the Uzbek Foreign Minister expressed deep dissatisfaction and surprise with the decision, the EU hopes that continued engagement, especially programmatic, and a future EU Commission delegation office in Tashkent will result in concrete progress, unlike the human rights dialogue heretofore. Nonetheless, this is likely the beginning of a cooling trend in EU-Uzbek relations. End summary.

The Human Rights Dialogue Continues  
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12. (C) The visit of the EU Special Representative to Central Asia, Pierre Morel, was planned to keep the EU dialogue with the Uzbeks moving. In a meeting with the CDA on May 29, Morel said the day prior, Foreign Minister Norov expressed "deep dissatisfaction" with the EU decision. Norov claimed the Uzbeks did all they could to conform to the EU's requests. The fact that sanctions were upheld was, according to Norov, "unacceptable," and reflects the EU's "double standards." Morel explained to Norov that the EU never promised to lift all its sanctions, and the Uzbeks still need to engage in a critical dialogue.

13. (C) During his week-long visit, Morel said he met with the Parliamentary Director of the Human Rights Center, the First Deputy Foreign Minister for the U.S. and Europe, and the Minister of Justice, regarding expanding cooperation. The Justice Minister said the rumor of Turayeva's double sentence was false and a criminal investigation is still going on (reftel). Morel also met with the Russian and Chinese ambassadors before taking a side trip to Bukhara, where he met with the Mayor and Imam.

14. (C) While the human rights dialogue has been "intense and useful", according to Morel, in principle there have been problems. Morel said the EU will revisit the dialogue and reevaluate its strategy at the end of the German Presidency. For now, Morel said, the EU plans to start the operational phase of its human rights dialogue. EU Commission experts are identifying programs to execute and creating guidelines in four areas: police training, improving courts and judicial procedures, strengthening the legal system, and exchanging

information on terrorism. It also will try to work with the GOU in implementing an anti-poverty strategy in the Ferghana Valley.

EU Commission to Open Shop in Tashkent, Maybe

16. (C) A large hurdle to the success of the above programs is the absence of an EU Commission delegation office in Tashkent. While there are plans to open the offices in all five Central Asian states, only Kazakhstan has one. The EU currently relies on Europa House, in Tashkent, to help, but has tentative plans to open up a delegates office in 2008. The Uzbeks have yet to accept the EU office. Morel said the EU is taking lessons from the OSCE on how to set-up shop in Uzbekistan and work with the GOU.

17. (C) The EU will apply its new Central Asia strategy once it is approved in June. This strategy has a wide framework and all 27 members can take part in its implementation. The strategy focuses on human rights, security and stability, democratic reform, rule of law, energy transportation, economic trade and investment, the environment, and education/training. Many of these are regional issues and require Uzbekistan's cooperation to work.

18. (C) Comment: Morel's visit was the first high-level Uzbek-EU engagement after the May 14 sanctions decision. Now that the Uzbeks have expressed their deep dissatisfaction with the decision, and have taken direct action with some EU members and the OSCE to reduce, suspend or stop engagement, the EU-Uzbekistan relationship is entering into a cooling period. The German Ambassador told the CDA on June 2 that he

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hopes by September or October the relationship will improve. Morel and most of the EU members in Tashkent realize improving the relationship is a long-term, uphill struggle that requires much patience and dialogue.  
HANSON